

### REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated November 27, 2006. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Initially, to facilitate the Examiner's reconsideration of the application, the specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised in order to make a few minor clarifying and other editorial amendments. Note that the changes to the abstract are submitted in the form of a substitute abstract. Copies of the amended portions of the specification and abstract with changes marked therein are provided above.

Next, by the above amendment, claims 1-16, 25-26 and 28-33 have been cancelled; claims 17-18, 22-24 and 27 have been amended; and claims 34-39 are newly presented. Therefore, claims 17-24, 27 and 34-39 are currently pending in the present application.

Further, as will be explained below, the prior art rejections have been rendered moot by the above amendments.

Next, on page 13 of the Office Action, it is noted with appreciation that claims 17-23 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, in order to place the application in condition for allowance:

claim 17 has been rewritten in independent form and includes all of the limitations of base claim 1;

claim 18 has been rewritten in independent form and includes all of the limitations of base claim 1 and intervening claims 5 and 13;

claim 22 has been rewritten in independent form and includes all of the limitations of base claim 1; and

claim 23 has been rewritten in independent form and includes all of the limitations of base claim 1.


Accordingly, claims 17, 18, 22 and 23 are now clearly allowable. Further, the remaining claims depend from one of the allowable independent claims, and are therefore allowable at least by virtue of their dependencies.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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